

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 091948Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5217
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: SOME INDICATIONS THAT PCI LINE IS HARDENING

SUMMARY. WITHIN THAT PAST FEW DAYS THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SIGNS OF A HARDENING OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY'S (PCI) LINE IN THE INTER-PARTY TALKS FOR A PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD. NOT ONLY IS THIS REFLECTED IN A CERTAIN RIGIDITY IN REACHING AGREEMENT ON SPECIFIC ISSUES PROPOSED FOR INCLUSION IN THE ACCORD, BUT ALSO IN A NEW INSISTENCE FOR MEASURES TO GUARANTEE THAT THE ACCORD, ONCE CONCLUDED, WILL BE CARRIED OUT. WE THEORIZIZE THAT INTERNAL PARTY PROBLEMS, AND/OR THE FEELING THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS' (DC) RESISTANCE TO FURTHER CONCESSIONS MIGHT BE WEAKENING, HAS LED THE PCI LEADERSHIP TO TAKE THIS SOMEWHAT MORE AGGRESSIVE LINE. WE DISCOUNT THE THEORY ADVANCED TO THE AMBASSADOR BY INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA TO THE EFFECT THAT THE CHANGED PCI TACTICS ARE THE RESULT OF PRESSURE FROM THE SOVIETS. END SUMMARY.

1. INRECENT DAYS WE HAVE SEEN CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF A STIFFENING OF THE PCI OSITION IN THE MANEUVERING
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GOING ON AS THE SIX POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE SO-CALLED CONSTITUITONAL ARC SEEK TO REACHA PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD "ON CERTAIN THINGS TO BE DONE." MORE TIME IS NEEDED, HOWEVER, TO DETERMINE TO WHAT EXTENT THIS EITHER REPRESENTS A TEMPORARY TACTIC OR A MAJOR CHANGE IN STRATEGY.

2. THE FIRST HINT OF A MORE AGGRESSIVE PCI
EVOLVED FROM THE MEETING AT PARTY HEADQUARTERS ON
JUNE 1 TO WHICH ALL REGIONAL PARTY SECRETAIRES AND
OTHER LOCAL PARTY OFFICIALS WERE INVITED. THE
OBVIOUS INTENT OF THE MEETING WAS TO PREPARE THESE
OFFICIALS TO RETURN TO THEIR JURISDICTIONS TO
PROGAGANDIZE THE CURRENT PARTY LINE. SPEAKING TO
THESE OFFICIALS, PARTY SECRETARIAT MEMBER GERARDO
CHIAROMONTE, CONSIDERED BY MANY AS THE PRESENT SECOND
IN COMMAND TO BERLINGUER, SAID THAT THE CURRENT
NEGOTIATIONS QUOTE SHOULD END WITH A COLLEGIAL MEETINGS,
WITH A MUTUALLY WORKED OUT PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD, LIMITED
BUT SERIOUS, AND ALSO WITH A VISIBLE STEP FORWARD IN
TERMS OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND IN THE RELATION-
SHIPS BETWEEN THE PARTIES ... AND TO US IT SEEMS
INEVITABLE THAT THIS WILL TOUCH UON THE PROBLEM OF
THE GOVERNMENT. END QUOTE.

3. ON THE HEELS OF CHIAROMONTE'S OBSERVATIONS, PCI
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES GROUP LEADER ALESSANDRO NATTA
GAVE AN INTERVIEW TO THE ROME DAILY PAESE SERA
(COMMUNIST CONTROLLED) ON JUNE 4. IN HIS COMMENTS,
NATTA TALKED OF THE NEED FOR A GOVERNMENTAL
RESHUFFLE, SUGGESTING THAT THIS COULD SERVE AS THE
VEHICLE FOR PROVIDING A GUARANTEE TO THE FORCES OF
THE LEFT THAT CONCRETE MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN TO
IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT THAT IS EVENTUALLY REACHED
BETWEEN THE PARTIES.

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4. A FURTHER INDICATION OF A STIFFENING OF THE
COMMUNISTS CAN BE FOUND IN THEIR REACTION TO INITIAL
REPORTS THAT DURING A MEETING AT THE END OF LAST WEEK
BETWEEN THE PCI AND DC EXPERTS, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED
ON LAW AND ORDER ISSUES INCLUDING PREVENTIVE DETENTION
AND INTERCEPTION OF TELEPHONE CALLS. THE EXCESSIVE
SPEED WITH WHICH THE PCI MOVED TO DENY THESE REPORTS
REFLECTED A DEPARTURE FROM THE PATTERN OF THE PARTY'S
BEHAVIOR IN RECENT WEEKS.

5. FINALLY, EVEN DC CIRCLES HAVE BEGUN TO COMMENT ON
A HARDENING OF THE PCI LINE. IN A PRIVATE CONVER-
SAIION WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON JUNE 7, INTERIOR
MINISTER COSSIGA, WHO KNOWN TO HAVE GOOD CONTACTS
WITHIN THE PCI WHICH TRANSCEND HIS PERSONAL RELATION-
SHIP TO PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER, DREW ATTENTION
TO THE COMMUNISTS' MORE AGGRESSIVE LINE. COSSIGA
ATTRIBUTED IT TO PRESSURE FROM THE SOVIETS, AND HE
INDICATED THAT MONITORING HAS INDICATED A HIGHER

FREQUENCY OF CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SOVIET AND ITALIAN PARTIES IN RECENT WEEKS.

6. COMMENT WE FIND THE COMMUNIST BEHAVIOR SOMEWHAT PUZZLING, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE PCI HAS BEEN TRYING EVEN HARDER THAN USUAL IN RECENT WEEKS TO PORTRAY ITSELF AS A FORCE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND REASONABLENESS, HAVING BACKED AWAY FROM ITS EARLIER THESIS THAT A CHANGE IN THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL FRAMEWORK WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO OVERCOME THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES.

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7. WE SUGGEST TWO POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE PARTY'S BEHAVIOR. THE FIRST IS THAT INTERNAL PARTY PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATING TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE BASE, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT. UNDOUBTEDLY, THE POSITION OF THE SOCIALISTS, (PSI), WHO HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY TAKING A HARDER NEGOTIATING POSITION, COMPLICATES LIFE FOR THE PCI LEADERSHIP IN DEALING WITH ITS SKEPTICAL BASE. THE RAPID ABOUT-FACE ON PUBLIC SECURITY ISSUES COULD HAVE REFLECTED A CONCERN THAT THE PARTY'S CONCESSIONS WOULD NOT GO DOWN WELL WITH THE BASE, ESPECIALLY WITH THE PSI SNIPING, WITHOUT

SOME EXPLANATORY GROUNDWORK AND PROPAGANDA BY
PARTY LEADERS. THE SECOND THEORY IS THAT THE LATEST
TRUN REPRESENTS A NEGOTIATING PLOY AT A TIME WHEN
THE PCI LEADERSHIP MIGHT PERCIEVE A CERTAIN SOFTNESS
IN THE DC NEGOTIATING POSTION. FROM ITS OWN STANDPOINT,
THE LEADERSHIP CERTAINLY CANNOT BE
FAULTED FOR TRYING TO GET ALL IT CAN AT A TIME
WHEN SOME IN THE RANKS ARE RESTLESS BECAUSE THE
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PARTY HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF SETTLING FOR TOO LITTLE.
IT IS PROBABLE THAT COMBINATION OF THESE TWO FACTORS
HAS CAUSED A TEMPORARY MODIFICATION IN THE PARTY'S
TACTICS. HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT THE PARTY WILL
PURSUE THIS LINE TO THE POINT THAT RISKS A TOTAL
RUPTURE WITH THE DC IN THE PRESENT TALKS FOR A PRO-
GRAMMATIC ACCORD. THE CAUTIOUS PCI REACTION TO THE
JUNE 7 DEFEAT OF ABORTION LEGISLATION IN THE SENATE
SUGGESTS THAT THE PARTY DOES NOT WISH TO GO BEYOND
A CERTAIN POINT IRRITATING ITS RELATION WITH THE
DC.

8. FINALLY, WE DO NOT AGREE WITH COSSIGA'S THESIS
THAT THE CHANGE IN THE PCI LINE IS THE RESULT OF
PRESSURE FROM THE SOVIETS. WHILE WE HAVE NOTED A MODERATE
INCREASE IN THE EXCHANGE OF DELEGATIONS BETWEEN THE
PCI AND THE RULING PARTIES OF EASTERN EUROPE, WE ARE
NOT AWARE OF ANY SHARP UPTURN IN CONTACTS WITH THE
SOVIETS IN RECENT WEEKS, NOR CAN WE FIND A MOTIVATION
WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN A SOVIET DECISION TO INTERVENE
PRECISELY AT THIS MOMENT.

GARDNER

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